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(CIA-SPIES)

(BY DANIEL F. GILMORE)

WASHINGTON (UPI) - CIA DIRECTOR STANSFIELD TURNER PLANS TO REMOVE 800 OPERATIVES FROM THE AGENCY'S WORLDWIDE COVERT AND CLANDESTINE BRANCH IN THE MOST SWEEPING REORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNIT SINCE THE CIA WAS FOUNDED, A SPOKESMAN SAID TUESDAY.

TURNER, WHO TOOK OVER AS AGENCY CHIEF IN FEBRUARY, INFORMED OFFICERS OF THE ACTION AT TWO MASS MEETINGS MONDAY AND TUESDAY AT THE CIA'S LARGE WHITE-DOMED, "BUBBLE ROOM" AUDITORIUM IN SUBURBAN LANGLEY, VA.

THE DRASTIC CUTS IN THE CIA'S DIRECTORATE OF OPERATIONS, OR CLANDESTINE SERVICES BRANCH, WILL TAKE PLACE OVER THE NEXT 26 MONTHS, THE SPOKESMAN SAID, AND BE CARRIED OUT BY NORMAL ATTRITION, RETIREMENTS AND DISMISSALS WHERE REQUIRED.

THE REDUCTIONS WOULD CUT THE OVERALL STRENGTH OF THE DIRECTORATE BY ALMOST 15 PER CENT FROM ITS REPORTED TOTAL FORCE OF ABOUT 6,000. THE CIA DOES NOT DISCLOSE THE NUMBER OF ITS EMPLOYEES OR WHERE THEY WORK.

TURNER WAS REPORTED TO HAVE PARTLY EXPLAINED THE FORTHCOMING ACTION AS A NECESSARY TRIMMING OF THE DIRECTORATE WHICH BECAME OVERSWOLLEN DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND NEVER GOT BACK TO "PEACETIME" LEVELS.

IN ADDITION, THE AGENCY HAS BEEN PLACING LESS AND LESS IMPORTANCE ON COVERT OPERATIONS, AND WHAT CLANDESTINE OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN DEEMED ESSENTIAL HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT UNDER THE MOST STRINGENT SAFEGUARDS.

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